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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [PREL](#) [EAID](#) [FI](#) [AF](#)  
SUBJECT: GOF PREPARING REPORT AIMED AT INCREASED ISAF  
COMMITMENTS

REF: A. THOME-MIDDLETON E-MAIL

[1](#)B. 10 JUL 07

Classified By: Polchief Gregory Thome, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: The GOF is preparing a wide-ranging proposal for increased participation in NATO/ISAF and for increased assistance to Afghanistan. Details are currently sketchy, but MFA officials expect the proposal to include an increase in Finnish troops; increased weapons and other materiel to support them; and possibly a donation of non-lethal equipment to Afghan security forces. The package is unlikely to include a donation of lethal weapons (i.e., AK-47s), because that issue has become very divisive and highly sensationalized, and the GOF wants to avoid seeing its commitment in Afghanistan derailed by hard political opposition to a lethal donation. Even without the AK-47s, we welcome this new initiative and believe it will lead to an increased Finnish role in ISAF. END SUMMARY.

Finns Look to Do More in Afghanistan

[1](#)2. (SBU) According to Finnish MFA security policy contacts, Foreign Minister Ilkka Kanerva has directed that a report be compiled recommending a broad increase in the Finnish contribution to the NATO/ISAF Mission in Afghanistan. The proposal is to be coordinated closely between the MFA and the MOD, then submitted this fall for cabinet consensus and eventual Parliamentary approval. Precise details are still unknown, as the drafters have only begun their work, but they tell us they expect the proposal to call for an increased Finnish troop commitment to ISAF; increased weapons and other materiel to support those troops; and -- possibly -- a donation of non-lethal equipment to the Afghan security forces.

Seeing is Believing

[1](#)3. (SBU) The Finnish MOD had been contemplating for months various scenarios under which it could do more in Afghanistan. However, our contacts say, three recent factors have influenced the ministerial level decision to begin moving forward: (1) a change in Government; (2) FM Kanerva's June 11 meeting with Secretary Rice, during which she encouraged Finland to do more in Afghanistan; and (3) perhaps most importantly, Defense Minister Jyri Hakamies's late June trip to Afghanistan. Hakamies was reportedly very impressed, both with the good work Finnish troops are doing in provincial reconstruction teams (PRTs) in Meymenah and Mazar-al-Sharif, as well as with the tremendous amount of work yet to be done to stabilize and rebuild Afghanistan.

No AK-47s Likely

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¶4. (C) Hakamies has publicly stated that no form of assistance is categorically "off the table," and our MFA contacts confirm that their report is to include an analysis of the pros and cons of making a donation of lethal materiel to the Afghan National Police (ANP). However, they caution, the "AK-47 issue" -- i.e., the long-standing, joint US-Afghan request that Finland donate some 100,000 excess Kalishnikovs to the ANP -- has become an extremely divisive domestic political issue. The previous government, led by then-FM Erkki Tuomioja and President Tarja Halonen, had rejected the request. Since then, both Halonen and Tuomioja -- from his new position as a senior Parliamentary committee chairman -- have remained vocally opposed to re-opening that decision. Technically, the issue was decided by the previous government and has never been re-opened. However, while in Afghanistan MOD Hakamies did publicly allude to the GOF's desire to do more. The press promptly seized on his suggestion that "nothing is off the table" as an indication that the divisive AK-47 issue had been re-opened -- prompting harsh responses not only from Tuomioja, but also from senior politicians in several political parties, including members of the governing coalition.

Vanhanen seeks calm. . .but no weapons

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¶5. (C) In seeking to calm the waters, PM Matti Vanhanen told the press that the AK-47 issue had not been re-opened, but went on to explain that the GOF was indeed contemplating other forms of increased assistance in Afghanistan. (Comment: Predictably, the press sensationalized the PM's comments about the AK-47s, but said little about the broader support proposal that is being prepared.) Privately, MFA officials tell us they

are enthusiastic about the possibility of the Vanhanen Government's winning broad-based parliamentary support for a package that includes increased Finnish troop commitments to ISAF and increased reconstruction and development assistance. However, they say that the senior political leadership is concerned that Tuomioja and others might torpedo the entire package if a lethal donation is included in the proposal.

Comment

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¶6. (C) Even without the lethal donation, we welcome this new initiative and believe it will lay the foundation for an increased Finnish role in the ISAF Mission. Kanerva, Hakamies (who personally may not be opposed to a lethal donation) and Vanhanen (who probably is opposed) appear to have hit upon a solid strategy -- i.e., excluding the AK-47s in their broader proposal, so that they can win broad based approval for a more robust Finnish commitment to ISAF. We believe that if they force the issue of the AK-47s, it could divide the cabinet (the Greens and the Center Party will oppose, with the Conservatives and the Swedish Peoples likely supporting), which in turn could kill the entire proposal. However, if handled carefully without a lethal component, the package is likely to win Parliamentary approval, even among the outspoken skeptics, and further improve the Finnish public's understanding of the positive leadership role their country can play in Afghanistan. Post will follow this issue closely and encourage the GOF in its efforts to create a proposal that leads to greater Finnish commitments. End Comment.

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